

January 9, 2007 - Slaughter Responds to President's Plan for Escalation of Iraq War

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Slaughter Responds to President's Plan for Escalation of Iraq War
Failed History and Pervasive Armor Shortages Will Increase Troop Deaths Without Bringing Security to Iraq

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, today responded to President Bush's reported plan to announce an escalation of the Iraq War by increasing the number of U.S. troops in the country by approximately 20,000.

"The President might no longer be concerned with what our top generals think, but Congress and the American people are," Rep. Slaughter said. "I took their concerns to heart when I voted against this war, and I'm listening to them now as I oppose this escalation."

"Escalating the war by rushing redeployments and extending tours is not a new strategy," Rep. Slaughter said. "Opposition to the Administration's stay-the-course approach has come from every corner of society. The only ones not listening are the President and his advisors."

"Escalation hasn't worked before, and there is no reason to believe it will work now," continued Slaughter. "An overwhelming majority of Americans oppose President Bush's handling of the war and oppose any further escalation in troop levels. Sending more of our men and women in uniform to Iraq will not change the fact that we are bogged down in a civil war that can only be ended by political negotiations."

Rep. Slaughter also responded to a report in today's Baltimore Sun citing a lack of next generation Humvees in Iraq critical to protecting American forces from increasingly deadly improvised explosive devices, a leading cause of U.S. troop deaths.

"Unjustifiable equipment shortages produced by poor management and questionable contracting have put our soldiers at risk since the first days of this war," Rep. Slaughter said. "Sending even more troops into a deadly conflict, all while knowing they will not have the best equipment available for their protection, is unconscionable."

"Because of Iraq, our military is broken," Rep. Slaughter said. "And yet, the President wants to place even greater strains on its equipment, our soldiers, and their families. Military suicide rates are up. Cases of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are afflicting tens, if not hundreds-of-thousands of men and women. Our armed forces are already over-extended, with many units facing prolonged deployments and the National Guard and Reserves strained to the breaking point. But the President wants to take us further down this road, exacerbating existing problems and placing our nation and its soldiers at even greater risk."

"It's time for this Administration to understand what the country, our generals, and our experts have known for a long time: we need a new way forward in Iraq, not just more of the same."

BACKGROUND

- Preview Escalation Strategy Didn't Turn Into Long Term Success

The 20,000 soldier increase in Iraq that President Bush will reportedly call for this evening will be at least the fifth such escalation since 2004. Past escalation of the U.S. military presence in Iraq has yet to produce a positive outcome. The following is a brief overview of previous instances of American troop level increases in Iraq which failed to translate into long-term security and stability.

Operation Together Forward, (June-October 2006): In June the Bush administration announced a new plan for securing Baghdad by increasing the presence of Iraqi Security Forces. That plan failed, so in July the White House announced that additional American troops would be sent into Baghdad. By October, a U.S. military spokesman, Gen. William Caldwell, acknowledged that the operation and troop increase was a failure and had "not met our overall expectations of sustaining a reduction in the levels of violence." [CNN, 12/19/06. Washington Post, 7/26/06. Brookings Institution, 12/21/06.]

Elections and Constitutional Referendum (September-December 2005): In the fall of 2005 the Bush administration increased troop levels by 22,000, making a total of 160,000 American troops in Iraq around the constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections. While the elections went off without major violence these escalations had little long-term impact on quelling sectarian violence or attacks on American troops. [Brookings Institution, 12/21/06. <http://www.icasualties.org/>]

Constitutional Elections and Fallujah (November 2004-March 2005): As part of an effort to improve counterinsurgency operations after the Fallujah offensive in November 2004 and to increase security before the January 2005 constitutional elections U.S. forces were increased by 12,000 to 150,000. Again there was no long-term security impact. [Brookings Institution, 12/21/06. New York Times, 12/2/04.]

Massive Troop Rotations (December 2003-April 2004): As part of a massive rotation of 250,000 troops in the winter and spring of 2004, troop levels in Iraq were raised from 122,000 to 137,000. Yet, the increase did nothing to prevent Muqtada al-Sadr's Najaf uprising and April of 2004 was the second deadliest month for American forces. [Brookings Institution, 12/21/06. <http://www.icasualties.org/>. USA Today, 3/4/04]

- Overwhelming Opposition From Top Military And Foreign Policy Experts

Not only do most Americans oppose escalation, top military leaders and prominent foreign policy experts reject President Bush's plan as well.

The Military Opposes an Escalation in Iraq

General Colin Powell: Surge Will Not Work. Powell said, "I am not persuaded that another surge of troops into Baghdad for purposes of suppressing this communitarian violence, this civil war, will work." [Face the Nation, CBS, 12/17/06]

General George Casey: Skeptical of Troop Escalation Plan. Casey: "It's always been my view that a heavy and sustained American military presence was not going to solve the problems in Iraq over the long term." [New York Times, 1/2/07]

General John Abizaid Thinks More Troops Will Only Keep the Iraqis from Taking Responsibility for Their Own Future. In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Abizaid said, "Senator McCain, I met with every divisional commander, General Casey, the corps commander, General Dempsey, we all talked together. And I said, in your professional opinion, if we were to bring in more American Troops now, does it add considerably to our ability to achieve success in Iraq? And they all said no. And the reason is because we want the Iraqis to do more. It is easy for the Iraqis to rely upon to us do this work. I believe that more American forces prevent the Iraqis from doing more, from taking more responsibility for their own future." [Senate Armed Services Committee Testimony, 11/15/06]

Joint Chiefs: "Unanimous Disagreement" to a Surge. A Washington Post article, using anonymous White House sources, reports that "White House officials [are] aggressively promoting the concept over the unanimous disagreement of the Joint Chiefs of Staff." [Washington Post, 12/19/06]

General James T. Conway, Commandant of the Marine Corps: "We do not believe that just adding numbers for the sake of adding numbers-just thickening the mix-is necessarily the way to go." [Lou Dobbs Tonight, CNN 12/18/06]

Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander General Wesley K. Clark: More Troops Will Not Deliver a Win. Clark wrote, "Will [a surge] deliver a 'win?' Probably not. But it does distract us from facing the deep-seated regional issues that must be resolved." [Washington Post, 1/8/07]

Oliver North: North said, "A 'surge' or 'targeted increase in US troop strength' or whatever the politicians want to call dispatching more combat troops to Iraq isn't the answer. Adding more trainers and helping the Iraqis to help themselves, is. Sending more US combat troops is simply sending more targets." [Human Events Online, 1/5/07]

Donald Rumsfeld: More Troops "Less Attractive." In a memo to the White House, Rumsfeld listed "Increase Brigade Combat Teams and US forces in Iraq substantially" under the category "Below the Line (less attractive options)." [New York Times, 12/3/06]

Major General Don Shepperd, USAF (Ret.): I Would Not Even Consider Increasing Troop Strength in Iraq. Shepperd, who works as a CNN military analyst, offered his analysis of what should be done next after he was briefed by members of the Iraq Study Group. He wrote, "I would not even consider increasing troop strength in Iraq." [CNN.com, 12/11/06]

Michael Vickers, Former Special Forces Officer: "All The Forces in The World" Won't Change Security Situation in Iraq. Vicks said, "The security situation is inextricably linked to politics. If you can solve some of the Iraqi political problems, the security situation becomes manageable. If you can't...all the forces in the world aren't going to change that." [The Newshour with Jim Lehrer, PBS, 12/12/06]

Lawrence Korb, Former Assistant Secretary of Defense: Korb said, "we had a chance in the beginning to send the right number of troops. We didn't, and now I think it would only make the situation worse and it would make the Iraqis more dependent on us" [Talk of the Nation, NPR, 9/18/06]

Robert Gates: Skeptical of More Troops. "According to two administration officials who asked not to be named, Robert Gates expressed his skepticism about a troop surge in Iraq on his first day on the job, December 18, at a Pentagon meeting with civilians who oversee the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marines." [New York Sun, 12/27/06]

Foreign Policy Experts Oppose an Escalation

Ambassador Richard Holbrooke: 40,000 Troops Would Make Little Difference. "[Some people are] saying that 30,000 or 40,000 more troops would make a difference. I respectfully disagree. With the tooth-to-tail ratios of the military -- that is combat soldiers versus cooks, people who run the PX's and the bowling alleys and so on -- with the fact that the first thing they have to do is build barracks, which are bullet, bomb-proof to protect themselves, any military guy you talk to will tell you that 40,000 troops will not make that kind of difference." [Charlie Rose Show, 8/14/06]

Michael E. O'Hanlon, Brookings Institute: Call for More Troops Repeats the Mistakes of Vietnam. O'Hanlon, said McCain's proposal to send more troops to Iraq "would just repeat the mistake of Vietnam," by sending an extra 100,000 troops. [Boston Globe, 10/24/06; New York Times, 11/14/06; Washington Post, 11/16/06]

Richard Haass, Former Bush Official and President of The Council On Foreign Relations: Even Doubling Troops Might Not Stabilize the Situation. "It's not clear to me that even if you double the level of American troops you would somehow stabilize the situation [in Iraq]." [Today, NBC News Transcript, 11/30/06]

Jessica Matthews, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: More Troops "Merely Palliative." "Sending more American troops should not divert the US from recognising that they are a palliative. Iraq cannot be pacified by military means alone. Without a new political plan, adopted quickly, the violence will grow and eventually overwhelm everyone involved." [Financial Times (London, England), 4/21/04]

Andrew Bacevich, International Relations Professors at Boston University: Surge Effects "Slim and None." Bacevich said the "chances that adding 20,000 or so US troops for several months would stabilize Baghdad are 'slim and none'." [AP, 12/19/06]

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